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Abstract

While counseling individual children is viewed by many as the most important function of an elementary counselor, little research has been done on the outcome of this counseling. This study was designed, to determine whether counseling affects student behavior in terms of: (1) academic performance, (2) peer relationships, and (3) personal adjustment. The investigators also wished to determine whether methods used in this study were appropriate for measuring counseling outcomes. Subjects were fifth and sixth graders in six schools. Each subject was rated on the Teacher Rating Scale and completed the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) (Intermediate Battery) and the California Test of Personality. (CPT). A sociogram for each of the 12 classrooms involved was completed. A total of 120 subjects were then chosen together with six counselors. Those in the experimental group received counseling while those in the control group did not. Conclusions and implications include that counseled students appeared, at least in teachers' eyes, to improve significantly. There were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their growth on the MAT or the CPT. It is possible, however, that standardized tests are not sensitive enough to pick up immediate behavioral change while teachers and peers might. (KJ)

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THE EFFICACY OF COUNSELING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

The counseling function is widely recognized as a key activity in elementary school guidance. Professional associations (ASCA 1966), practitioners (Frost and Frost 1966), and authorities in the field (Hill 1964), (Peters 1968) all view individual counseling as a most important function of the counselor in grades K-6. Counseling contributes in a more direct way to meeting the needs of elementary school pupils than any other activity (Van Hoose 1968).

While it is agreed that counseling is a most vital aspect of elementary school guidance, there is a serious lack of research on the outcomes of this activity. Most of the efforts to date have centered upon investigations of counselor behavior (Van Hoose and Peters 1968), and topics discussed by children in their interviews (Hawkins 1968). The few exceptions to this condition are represented by the efforts of Kranzler, Mayer, Dyer, and Munger (1966) and by Mayer and Baker, (1967) who have given some attention to the results of group counseling.

The attention now being given to counseling individuals in grades K-6 suggests that research on the outcomes of this service needs to be accelerated. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the results of counseling individual pupils in the elementary school. Specifically the study attempted to determine whether counseling affects student behavior in (1) academic performance, (2) peer relationships, and (3) personal adjustment. In addition, the investigators wished to determine whether methods used in the present study were appropriate for measuring counseling outcomes. Thus, this report attempts to communicate not only results of the study, but it also describes some of the methodological understandings which may be of help to other investigators.

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*Dr. Van Hoose directed the study described in this report. Dr. Pietrofesa assisted in the analysis of results and preparation of the report. Mrs. Bain, Mrs. Brooks, Mr. Coleman, Mrs. Mann, Mrs. Rasmussen, and Mr. Yashinsky are the elementary school counselors who carried out the counseling for this study.

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Studies of this sort have several obvious limitations. First, research on counseling results is complicated by our lack of agreement about the goals of counseling. Second, the present study reflects the status of research in the field. With improved methods and additional studies, more sophisticated approaches can be developed. Finally, the elementary school age child and the elementary school presents some investigatory problems not covered by the textbooks. Nevertheless, some skills can be acquired through practice and explicit reports of methods that have been used may stimulate the development of new and better methods.

METHOD

Setting

This study was conducted in six elementary schools in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Four schools are in the middle class suburbs, one is a Detroit fringe area school, while one is in inner-city Detroit.

The Selection Process

At the beginning of the 1968-69 school year, 12 fifth and sixth grade teachers rated each pupil in her class on academic achievement, peer relationships, and personal adjustment. Using a 5 point scale, teachers assigned a rating of 1-5 (1-Poor: 5-Superior) to each pupil on each of the three areas.

The school records of pupils in the 12 classes were checked in order to identify pupils repeating a grade, slow learners, those receiving special help such as tutoring or therapy, and pupils described as having severe emotional problems. Students in these categories were excluded from the study. Thus, from the initial group of 296 pupils, 211 were selected as potential subjects.

Pre Testing

In addition to the Teacher Rating Scale, three other instruments were used in the study. The Metropolitan Achievement Test Intermediate Battery (complete) is designed to measure academic achievement in all basic subjects in grades 4-6. The California Test of Personality is designed to measure several aspects of personal adjustment. (See Table 1).

A Sociogram was completed in each of the 12 classrooms. The Sociogram used one question which permitted three selections and provided no opportunity to reject.

Subjects

Careful analysis of test data, sociometric results, teacher ratings, and school

records resulted in the selection of 120 pupils as subjects for the study. As noted above, pupils at either extreme in terms of achievement, ability and emotional status, were excluded from the study.

Subjects were fifth and sixth graders whose chronological ages ranged from 9 yrs. 8 mos. to 11 yrs. 4 mos.. All were in the normal range of intelligence according to data from school records. From a possible total of 15 points on the Teacher Rating Scale the rating of subjects fell between 5 and 9 points.

The odd-even method was used in selecting the 60 experimentals and 60 controls. The twelve teachers who participated in rating their pupils were not advised on which pupils were finally selected as subjects.

Counselors

The six counselors in this study all have a minimum of a Masters degree in guidance and counseling. Three counselors had three years counseling experience, one had two years, and two were beginning their second year as counselors.

Counseling

Each counselor had 20 counselees in his group; 10 experimentals and 10 controls. Pupils in the control group had one 30-40 minute interview with their counselor each week for a period of 14 weeks. Those in the control group had no contact with a counselor during that period.

At the initial interview counselors advised subjects that their participation in counseling was voluntary, however, counselees were encouraged to participate. The six counselors, by mutual agreement, decided that interviews should be structured. Counselees were aided in identifying concern(s), ie., academic, peer relations, or personal-social, and counselors stated that one purpose of counseling was to work on the concern(s).

During the period of the study, five subjects changed schools. Thus, the results are based upon data from 59 experimentals and 56 controls.

Post Testing

At the end of the 14 week period, the Metropolitan Achievement Test and the California Test of Personality were again administered to both groups. In addition, teachers again prepared a Teacher Rating Scale and completed a Sociogram in their class.

Statistical Procedures

The data of the study were processed on IBM cards and analyses were performed on the IBM 360 computer. The t test for related scores and analysis of variance was used in a variety of configurations.

RESULTS

The overall group, that is both the combined control and experimental sub-groups, showed in pre-post measurement significant gains on all measures except the sociometric device. (See Table 1)

TABLE 1

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Overall Group [1]
(n = 115)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.39	1.04	2.48	1.04	1.09
CSA	51.28	10.31	53.43	10.16	2.41*
CPA	46.62	10.78	49.27	12.24	3.22**
WK	26.91	10.11	30.31	10.76	6.77**
RED	18.05	6.00	19.98	7.29	4.28**
SPE	23.50	10.29	26.82	11.53	4.53**
LAN	35.01	10.04	36.06	10.00	3.68**
LSS	11.34	4.96	13.18	5.08	4.27**
ARC	15.40	5.33	18.03	7.05	4.71**
APS	16.10	6.26	20.20	5.60	7.77**
TRAT	7.70	1.48	8.99	2.05	6.87**

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[1] In this and subsequent tables the following symbols will be used:

M	Mean
S	Standard Deviation
Soc	Sociometric Peer Rating
CSA	California Social Adjustment Scale
CPA	California Personal Adjustment Scale
WK	Metropolitan Word Knowledge Scale
RED	Metropolitan Reading Scale
SPE	Metropolitan Spelling Scale
LAN	Metropolitan Language Scale
LSS	Metropolitan Language Study Skills Scale
ARC	Metropolitan Arithmetic Computation Scale
APS	Metropolitan Arithmetic Skills Scale
TRAT	Teacher Rating Scale
*	Significant at the .05 level
**	Significant at the .01 level

The significant change pattern was similar for both sexes. As seen in Tables 2 and 3, the overall males displayed significant growth on eight measures, while their female counterparts did so on seven measures. The positive movement on the Metropolitan scales is to be expected, simply because students are getting older and are acquiring more knowledge.

TABLE 2

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Overall Males

(n = 60)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.32	.965	2.47	.910	1.53
CSA	49.87	11.53	52.10	10.84	1.66
CPA	46.53	10.68	50.15	11.41	3.17**
WK	26.73	9.59	29.88	10.45	5.21**
RED	17.22	6.11	19.60	7.03	4.35**
SPE	21.70	9.31	24.98	9.89	3.10**
LAN	34.00	9.26	36.36	8.43	1.98
LSS	10.98	5.25	12.60	5.03	2.84**
ARC	15.58	4.87	17.67	6.93	2.55*
APS	15.73	6.08	20.22	5.13	5.49**
TRAT	7.70	1.54	8.78	2.15	3.81**

TABLE 3

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Overall Females

(n^2=55)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.47	1.12	2.49	1.17	.142
CSA	52.82	8.65	54.87	9.24	1.76
CPA	46.71	10.98	48.31	13.12	1.35
WK	27.11	10.73	30.78	11.16	4.47**
RED	18.96	5.79	20.40	7.60	1.97
SPE	25.55	11.03	28.91	12.92	3.31**
LAN	36.11	10.80	39.91	11.27	3.32**
LSS	11.73	4.63	13.82	5.11	3.17**
ARC	15.20	5.84	18.44	7.22	4.28**
APS	16.49	6.50	20.18	6.13	5.62**
TRAT	7.71	1.42	9.22	1.94	6.35**

The overall experimental group showed significant gains on nine measures, including the sociometric and the Teacher Rating Scale.

TABLE 4

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Overall Experimental Group

(n = 59)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.22	.966	2.46	1.02	2.03*
CSA	50.53	11.44	52.73	10.62	1.99
CPA	44.76	10.96	48.15	12.72	3.21**
WK	26.47	9.52	30.10	9.95	4.93**
RED	17.90	5.67	19.17	7.03	1.84
SPE	22.45	9.62	25.81	10.13	3.27**
LAN	34.69	9.12	37.93	9.23	2.68**
LSS	11.05	4.68	12.64	4.68	3.14**
ARC	15.97	4.93	18.63	6.51	3.62**
APS	16.37	6.63	20.39	5.77	5.18**
TRAT	7.59	1.51	9.32	2.22	6.20**

At the same time, the overall control group changed on eight measures, but did not do so on the peer sociometric device. In fact, they displayed change in a negative direction.

TABLE 5

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Overall Control Group
(n = 56)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.57	1.09	2.50	1.06	-.683
CSA	52.07	9.01	54.16	9.69	1.47
CPA	48.57	10.32	50.45	11.71	1.47
WK	27.38	10.76	30.54	11.63	4.62**
RED	18.21	6.38	20.84	7.51	4.66**
SPE	24.62	10.92	27.89	12.85	3.10**
LAN	35.34	10.99	38.20	10.84	2.50*
LSS	11.64	5.26	13.75	5.45	2.97**
ARC	14.80	5.71	17.41	7.58	3.05**
APS	15.80	5.90	20.00	5.46	5.81**
TRAT	7.82	1.45	8.64	1.82	3.49**

Although both groups showed gains significant at the .01 level on the Teacher Rating Scale, the experimental group had a t of 6.20 compared to the control group t of 3.49. Tables 6-9 break down pre-post changes for the experimental and control groups by sex. Comparatively, growth was primarily found in the male experimental and female control groups.

TABLE 6

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Male Experimental Group
(n = 35)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.20	.964	2.40	.976	1.42
CSA	48.29	13.01	52.14	11.43	2.59*
CPA	44.66	11.12	48.83	12.55	3.00**
WK	26.29	9.10	29.51	9.86	4.05**
RED	16.86	5.56	18.83	7.13	2.57*
SPE	20.83	8.06	24.37	8.60	2.59*
LAN	33.31	8.43	37.03	7.72	2.17*
LSS	10.89	4.78	12.83	5.34	3.19**
ARC	15.11	3.97	17.54	5.84	2.41*
APS	16.11	5.86	20.09	4.88	3.66**
TRAT	7.51	1.48	8.97	2.11	3.99**

TABLE 7

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Male Control Group
(n = 25)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.48	.963	2.56	.821	.625
CSA	52.08	8.83	52.04	10.20	-.164
CPA	49.16	9.64	52.00	9.54	1.46
WK	27.36	10.40	30.40	11.42	3.21**
RED	17.72	6.90	20.68	6.87	3.88**
SPE	22.92	10.88	25.84	11.60	1.72
LAN	34.96	10.41	35.44	9.42	.309
LSS	11.12	5.95	12.28	4.64	1.08
ARC	16.24	5.93	17.84	8.35	1.16
APS	15.20	6.45	20.40	5.56	4.16**
TRAT	7.96	1.62	8.53	2.22	1.27

TABLE 8

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Female Experimental Group
(n = 24)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.25	.989	2.54	1.10	1.43
CSA	53.79	7.80	53.58	9.50	-.135
CPA	44.92	10.95	47.17	13.17	1.38
WK	26.75	10.30	30.96	10.23	3.00**
RED	19.42	5.58	19.67	7.00	.196
SPE	24.91	11.37	28.00	11.98	1.95
LAN	36.71	9.88	39.25	11.13	1.54
LSS	11.29	4.63	12.38	3.60	1.23
ARC	17.21	5.95	20.21	7.21	2.79**
APS	16.75	7.74	20.83	6.96	3.76**
TRAT	7.71	1.57	9.83	2.32	4.98**

TABLE 9

t Test for Related Observations

(Pre = M_1, Post = M_2) for Female Control Group
(n = 31)

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOC	2.65	1.20	2.45	1.23	-1.24
CSA	52.06	9.31	55.87	9.06	2.32*
CPA	48.10	10.98	49.19	13.22	.645
WK	27.39	11.21	30.65	11.99	3.30**
RED	18.61	6.01	20.97	8.11	2.87**
SPE	26.03	10.93	29.60	13.76	2.65*
LAN	35.65	11.60	40.42	11.53	3.03**
LSS	12.06	4.68	14.94	5.84	3.05**
ARC	13.64	5.35	17.06	7.03	3.21**
APS	16.29	5.48	19.68	5.46	4.14**
TRAT	7.71	1.32	8.74	1.46	4.41**

Upon examination of individual scales, it became apparent that the control group started out higher than the experimental group, at times, almost significantly higher. The experimental group narrowed the differences and even surpassed their control counterparts in some instances. (See Table 10)

TABLE 10

A Comparison of the Overall Experimental (n = 59)
and Overall Control (n = 56) Groups
on Pre and Post Scores

	Experimentals		Controls		
	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
Pre-Sociometric	2.22	.966	2.57	1.09	1.83
Post-Sociometric	2.46	1.02	2.50	1.06	.218
Pre-CSA	50.53	11.44	52.07	9.01	.802
Post-CSA	52.73	10.62	54.16	9.69	.754
Pre-CPA	44.76	10.96	48.57	10.32	1.92
Post-CPA	48.15	12.72	50.45	11.71	1.00
Pre-WK	26.47	9.52	27.38	10.76	.475
Post-WK	30.10	9.95	30.54	11.63	.216
Pre-RED	17.90	5.67	18.21	6.38	.281
Post-RED	19.17	7.03	20.83	7.51	1.23
Pre-SPE	22.47	9.54	24.25	11.17	.918
Post-SPE	25.81	10.13	27.89	12.85	.958
Pre-LAN	34.69	9.12	35.34	10.99	.343
Post-LAN	37.93	9.23	38.20	10.84	.141
Pre-LSS	11.05	4.68	11.64	5.26	.639
Post-LSS	12.64	4.68	13.75	5.45	1.17
Pre-ARC	15.97	4.93	14.80	5.71	1.17
Post-ARC	18.63	6.51	17.41	7.58	.925
Pre-APS	16.37	6.63	15.80	5.90	.485
Post-APS	20.00	5.46	20.39	5.77	.371
Pre-TRAT	7.59	1.51	7.82	1.45	.825
Post-TRAT	9.32	2.22	8.64	1.82	1.79

The next step then was to compare the differences in growth rather than simply pre-post means.

Growth differences were compared and found to be significant only on the Teacher Rating Scale. (See Tables 11-13) It was apparent that the overall experimental group changed in a positive manner more significantly than the control group. This difference, when broken down by sex, was founded in growth in the female experimental group. The experimental group also appeared to improve quite noticeably on the peer sociometric rating.

TABLE 11

Comparison of the Difference Between Pre and Post Scores Within the Overall Experimental (M_1, n = 59) and Overall Control (M_2, n = 56) Groups

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOCD	.237	.897	.714	.783	1.96
CSAD	2.20	8.49	2.09	10.66	.637
CPAD	3.39	8.11	1.88	9.54	.919
WKD	3.63	5.66	3.16	5.12	.463
REDD	1.27	5.32	2.63	4.22	1.51
SPED	3.36	7.84	3.27	7.82	.606
LAND	3.24	9.29	2.86	8.54	.228
LSSD	1.59	3.90	2.11	5.32	.593
ARCD	2.66	5.65	2.61	6.40	.479
APSD	4.02	5.95	4.20	5.40	.169
TRATD	1.73	2.14	.821	1.76	2.48*

TABLE 12

Comparison of the Difference Between Pre and Post Scores Within the Male Experimental (M_1, n = 35) and Male Control (M_2, n = 25) Groups

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOCD	.200	.833	.800	.640	.604
CSAD	3.86	8.81	4.00	12.14	1.44
CPAD	4.17	8.22	2.84	9.73	.573
WKD	3.23	4.72	3.04	4.74	.152
REDD	1.97	4.53	2.96	3.81	.888
SPED	3.54	8.11	2.92	8.47	.288
LAND	3.71	10.11	.480	7.75	1.34
LSSD	1.94	3.61	1.16	5.37	.676
ARCD	2.43	5.95	1.60	6.91	.497
APSD	3.97	6.42	5.20	6.25	.739
TRATD	1.46	2.16	.560	2.20	1.57

TABLE 13

Comparison of the Difference Between Pre and Post Scores Within the Female Experimental (M_1, n = 24) and Female Control (M_2, n = 31) Groups

Variable	M_1	S_1	M_2	S_2	t
SOCD	.292	.999	.194	.873	1.92
CSAD	-.208	7.54	3.81	9.14	1.74
CPAD	2.25	7.98	1.10	9.47	.479
WKD	4.21	6.87	3.26	5.49	.570
REDD	.250	6.25	2.35	4.56	1.44
SPED	3.09	7.59	3.57	7.37	.232
LAND	2.54	8.11	4.77	8.78	.967
LSSD	1.08	4.31	2.87	5.23	1.35
ARCD	3.00	5.28	3.42	5.94	.273
APSD	4.08	5.32	3.39	4.55	.523
TRATD	2.13	2.09	1.03	1.30	2.38*

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. Elementary school children who receive counseling appear to improve significantly upon ratings by their teachers in comparison to a non-counseled control group. At least then in the eyes of the teacher, counseling does make a difference. Peer ratings also seem to improve much more so for the experimental group than the control group.

2. There were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their growth on the Metropolitan Achievement or the Personality Tests.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is apparent that the classroom teacher gives a more improved rating to a child who is receiving counseling than a non-counseled counterpart. Significant

improvement is noted. The same can probably be said in regard to peer ratings--that is--they also seem to undergo improvement as the child receives counseling. On the other hand significant differences between control and experimental groups are not noted on standardized test batteries. It may very well be that standardized instruments are not sensitive enough to picking up immediate behavioral changes that do affect relations with peers and adults. For example, a child who receives counseling may go back to the classroom with his need for attention satisfied, and become less demanding in his relations with his teacher. Such immediate behavioral changes probably do not have an impact upon standardized test performance, but they do change more quickly peer and teacher perceptions. An obvious limitation of this study is the short time span which it covered. With increased hours of counseling over a year to two years, one might expect to see behavioral changes, already apparent to peer and teacher, reflected on testing instruments.

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